

Developing Local Preachers and Worship Leaders in the District

The London Course

UPDATE

The District Challenge

Back in the autumn of 2007, the London District Synod passed a resolution setting itself a challenge to recruit and train 20 local preachers under the age of 20; 20 local preachers under the age of 40 and for circuits to recruit and train 10 worship leaders. The aim was to meet the 'challenge' in a space of two years. An ambitious time scale, an exciting and noble challenge – but did we do it? Four years on, we took time to find out! In this bulletin we spoke to Paul Kybird (DDE), Daniella Fetuga-Joensuu (DTO) and Richard Hamilton Foy (former convenor of Worship Task Group) and a volunteer helper with the administration of the London Course. We've also spoken to a number of local preacher secretaries in the District looking to find out how this challenge and the ongoing development of local preachers are met in their local settings. This update explores the excitement and challenges involved in meeting the 'District Challenge' and stories that demonstrate its impact at circuit level. Enjoy & reflect!

Editors, Nwabisa & team

What is the background to the London Course?

To meet its challenge of recruiting 20 local preachers under 20 and 20 local preachers under 40, the District secured a grant from the John Laing Trust that enabled it to develop what is now known as the London Course. The course meets the Learning Requirements of Faith & Worship and has the full support of the Connexion. The aim of the course was twofold - firstly, to provide a District facility that will help Circuits who didn't have enough resources locally to run their own Faith and Worship training for local preachers, and secondly to make the training of local preachers accessible to the diversity of people and their gifts in London. So there is emphasis on both theological and biblical competence as well as practice.

How is the course structured?

The course runs over a period of 18 months, at the end of which the students are assessed by external examiners and then recommended to their Circuits for recognition as local preachers. For the duration of the course, students attend tutorials once a week, currently held at Westminster Central Hall, from 6.30 – 9pm every Wednesday. They also attend 7 intense residential weekends and must submit 12 assignments. Each student is supported at Circuit level by a mentor who meets regularly with them. On completion of the course the students enter into a 3 year contract to develop the discipline of ongoing study and to cover any learning outcomes of Faith and Worship that might have been missed during the course (this translates to about 12 hours study a year).

Tell us about the current course?

London Course 3 is our 4th intake of students. It's exciting since we have over 30 students in the current course from diverse cultural backgrounds including African, African Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, English, Indian and Sri Lankan. The numbers are much higher this year than for earlier courses and this is a source of both joy and challenge. Our training room accommodates a maximum of 24 people – so this year we've had to look elsewhere for a bigger space. Our thanks go to Martin Turner, Superintendent at Westminster Central Hall, who has kindly allowed us to use the Chapel. The training Team (Daniella, Paul and Richard who helps with administration of the course) work with a good number of tutors who come from diverse cultural backgrounds, with different





London Course Tutorial and residential photos

experiences and are a mixture of lay and ordained. The tutorials are lively and full of buzz and the students work well together.

What impact is the course having?

The course is making a difference on a number of fronts. Over 60 students have gone through the course since it was started 4 years ago. The current students value the moral support, the fellowship and working together. Some students who have gone through the course have gone on to candidate, as the course has confirmed their calling into full time ministry. The Circuits that have sent students to the course are very positive about it and recognise the help it is to them in filling the gap where they lack resources. Students go back to their Circuits with some creative ways of preaching the word of God; some are even using Skype as a tool to facilitate learning. The course has also had a wider impact at a Connexional level. The team has visited 7 districts to share its experience of doing Faith and Worship differently, and Paul has worked with the Lincoln and Grimsby District, helping them to shape their own version of the 'London Course'.

What future challenges/opportunities do you foresee for the London Course?

The increase in potential number of students wanting to do the course is fantastic but with it comes a number of challenges – both practical and financial. This year we've had to improvise and think on our feet but going forward we need to think through different solutions if the course is to continue. The course has received a limited grant from District Advance Fund, but with the increased demand the amount doesn't stretch far.

The redevelopment of the District website will provide new opportunities for the way the course is administered. This will reduce the work load for Richard who is excited by this prospect!

Finally, have you achieved your 20:20 & 20:40 challenge?

No! Not as we expected! It has been difficult to find as many younger people as we had hoped, and there is an important question and ongoing challenge for Circuits about how we help our younger people to take responsibility for worship in the lives of their churches. On the other hand, Yes! We have been overwhelmed by the demand for the London Course and impressed by the quality of those who take part. We know that there are many people studying for Faith and Worship by the traditional method. The next few years will therefore see a new generation of Local Preachers and we await their impact on the lives of our churches with excitement.

Interview with Paul, Daniella and Richard



Continuing LP's Development

We asked Daniella, the District Training Officer and LP's Secretary Assistant to tell us what the District is doing to encourage continuing LP's development, and this is what she said.

The team listens to feedback from the Pink Forms – and responds to the needs of those LP's, especially those training in Faith & Worship the traditional way. The feedback shows that the challenge for churches and circuits is mainly finding ways to encourage the Continuing Learning Preacher Development (CLPD). Our response to this is to organise variety of training at a district level to address specific needs. In this year for instance, we had planned and ran 4 different training days:

- 7th May – Local Preachers Mentors and Tutors Day
- 31st May – In partnership with College of Preachers
- 16th July – Focusing on Expository Preaching led by Martin Turner
- 15th Oct – 'Raising the Bar' – Looking at how we can improve the standards of preaching led by Geoff Cornell and personal tutors for their sections A, B, C & D



London Course student in action

Two young local preachers take on a challenge of leading the youth work at Newham Circuit

How did it all start?

Yes, two local preachers Sanya Strachan and Jones Agyeman have volunteered to lead the young people in our circuit as well as continue with their call to preach!!!. They were working closely with our former youth leader Araba, who left the post vacant last summer. Araba had started various activities with young people including singing and acting. She empowered them with new skills and encouraged their confidence to stand in front of the congregation and share their gifts. She had also involved them in activities outside the circuit - nationally. In my opinion Sanya and Jones feel obliged to continue to cultivate the seeds that were planted by Araba – and they have answered to this amazing call by offering their gifts and love for the young people!!

So what is happening now?

At Local Preachers meeting last month we had our first brainstorming session around the matter of 'how to involve young people in adult service'. The Local Preachers welcomed this idea. However we agreed to form a structure in order to run this transition smoothly. There are still questions to be answered and considered as well as an 'action plan' because:

- traditionally, worship is designed for adults, hence there 's youth /Sunday school class
- language barriers - finding a balanced and simple language to be understood by both adults and children that ensures that the service is enjoyable to all
- how to prepare the congregation for this change
Maybe the young people have been prepared and nurtured, but not sure if local preachers and congregation are ready for this transition. I think what I can strongly tell you is that the " vision has been planted all we need is to chase it"

On the 29th October, Sanya was recognised as fully accredited Local Preacher; in the same service the Youth Leaders were recognised. The young people led all aspects of the service apart from delivering the sermon. It was evident that they had been nurtured and were well prepared. All I can say that many good things are happening in Newham – watch this space!

By Susan Mthimkulu , LP Secretary Newham circuit



Continuing LP's Development

We asked the Teddington Circuit how they go about encouraging LP's continuing development in their circuit, and this is what Robert Mortimer, the LP Secretary had to say.

One advantage of being a small Circuit of five churches spread along a short stretch of the River Thames between Kempton Park Race Course and Hampton Court Palace is that we do not have far to travel to meet.

We feel blessed that we have a team of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders who value the opportunity to meet together monthly (except August) to share either in Fellowship or for the LP Business Meeting. The Fellowship discussions, which are on a range of topics, fulfil our response to CLPD (Continuing Local Preacher Development).

Recently, we have developed an informal system of Personal Reflections on the services we conduct and this has been found to be very useful.

'I never expected that after a 20 year break from youth work, to be involved again'

A new beginning

Almost two years ago we realised that we had teenagers in our church (Welling Methodist Church). One of the parents asked the question what we had for teenagers. We had to admit that we had nothing; they were too old for Cubs/Brownies' etc. Our first thought was "Who could we find to run something for them?" The vast majority of our congregation was now over 70 years of age.

Our senior steward, Gillian Ross, and I agreed that it was down to us. We began a youth Fellowship in March 2010 on Tuesday evenings, meeting 6-8pm. The main part of the evening is Bible Study and prayer with pizza and coke at the end.

We began with 5 members; we now have 8 aged between 12 and 19, with the oldest now at university. The group is very gifted and enthusiastic and is very active within our church, including leading a service once a quarter. As a Circuit we have started a circuit young people's day each quarter, they are the key players in that. They are very well known in the 'Welling Churches Together' Summer Play scheme 'Spark in the Park', where they play a very active role.

What's next for us?

In the New Year we hope to extend our Tuesday meeting by an extra hour to finish at 9pm. The church has kindly granted permission for us to use the worship area for recreation and has provided funds for equipment (such as Table Tennis etc). We hope this will encourage friends to come along. I never expected that after a 20 year break from youth work, I would be involved again! I trust the Lord to keep one strong and young enough to carry on establishing this group.

By Terry Egan, LP Secretary Lesnes Abbey Circuit



London Course students in action



Four new LP's recognised in a Circuit service where the President of Conference was a guest speaker

On the 22nd May, we held our Circuit combined event, in our new church at Forest Hill, which was attended by 200 people. The guest speaker was Revd Alison Tomlin the President of Conference at the time. Alison spoke in the all age worship service about 'building on sure foundation'. Her talk was very interesting and inclusive of all ages. The children participated fully and had lots of fun as they engaged in activities such as building on 'cushions' and on the 'platform' to illustrate some elements of the talk. The whole atmosphere of the service was relaxed with lots of singing and dancing. We had our own Circuit choir which sang wonderfully!

It was in this joyous context that the 'Presentation of the Bibles' to our 4 new local preachers, three of which had trained through the London Course and one via the Faith and Worship, took place.

To round things off we all shared a buffet lunch and had a great time in conversation and fellowship. It was just an excellent and an enjoyable occasion for everyone.

Mrs Valerie Tredinnick, LP Secretary Sydenham and Forest Hill Circuit

We talk to Richard Hamilton-Foyne who was appointed by the District to convene the Worship Task Group, which was entrusted with the task, among other things, of helping circuits to recruit and train worship leaders!

Tell us about the Worship Leaders challenge, how has it gone?

The challenge was for each circuit to recruit and train 10 Worship Leaders over a period of 2 years. Approximately 70 new worship leaders have been trained across the District since 2007. We find that 10 for smaller circuits is unrealistic but practical for bigger circuits. For instance, Harrow & Hillingdon is the biggest circuit and have about 15 Worship leaders trained.

How do you go about the recruiting those interested in worship leading?

We run and support worship leaders training courses and workshops throughout the District. The most recent District Course started on the 8th November, 4 people new to Worship Leading and 4 existing Worship Leaders are attending. The course was advertised through the District's Website and Weekly Update.

What exactly do you do on Worship Leaders training Courses? What do you teach them? What do they learn?

The London District helped the Connexion to create a new course for Worship Leaders. This is now used to support our training. We try to assist people to develop their skills, to better understand worship and to start to try to comprehend the worshipping needs in their own congregation

How is the course received?

We get very positive feedback; God is calling a good number of people to be worship leaders. The Connexional Team is looking at how all Worship Leaders and Local Preachers are trained. An interim report will be published to the 2012 Conference and it is hoped that a new scheme will be agreed in 2013

What challenges have you encountered?

We find that churches/ministers need to be more educated about the role of Worship Leaders. Worship Leaders need to be more involved in the worship life of their churches and be given space to exercise what they have learned from their training. They want to do more than simply leading the prayers of intercession.

In your view what can ministers do to involve worship leaders more?

This is difficult. Ministers are busy people, but where there are Worship Leaders they may need to think more about working in a team. This could mean that they have to change their preparation routine for a service to enable other people work to with them

Interview with Richard Hamilton-Foyne, Worship Leaders Training

